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SUBJECT: FIRST WOMEN'S MENTORING PROGRAM LAUNCHED IN ARMENIA

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Summary  
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¶1. On December 8, Ambassador Yovanovitch launched the first women's mentoring program in Armenia for female students of the American University of Armenia (AUA) and local Armenian women leaders. Mentors and mentees were introduced to each other and learned about the concept and objectives of the year-long mentoring program, which will be administered by AUA. Ambassador Yovanovitch and AUA Provost Dr. Lucig Danielian delivered remarks highlighting the special calling women have to support and promote the careers of other women. Press extensively covered the event. End summary.

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Engaging the Other Fifty Percent  
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¶2. On December 8, Ambassador Yovanovitch inaugurated the first women's mentoring program in Armenia for 45 female students of the American University of Armenia (AUA) and local Armenian women leaders. The year-long program, which will be administered by AUA, introduces the concept of formal mentoring to Armenian women and provides a unique opportunity for women leaders to impart career advice, share their experience, and serve as role models for the promising young students. The program was designed with a special focus on young women due to the fact that, although Armenian women are engaged in all aspects of Armenian society, they are significantly underrepresented in key positions in government and business. Mentors were selected based on commitment to public service, leadership, and expertise in their fields. Mentees were selected and matched according to strong academic performance, potential, and their specific fields of interest.

¶3. The event, hosted at the CMR, was organized as an intimate, informal opportunity for mentors and mentees to meet and learn about the program. Ambassador Yovanovitch and Dr. Danielian delivered remarks highlighting the special calling women have to support and promote the careers of other women. Dr. Danielian noted that the mentoring program embraces the best of American and Armenian traditions, stating that America has a legacy of grassroots support for women and consciousness-raising. She reminded the audience that Armenia had women serving in its first parliament before American women had the right to vote. She urged women in the crowd to "recapture that spirit" and "break through the glass ceiling." Ambassador Yovanovitch remarked that she had benefitted from many excellent mentors throughout her own career. She said that women around the world are meeting the challenges they face by working together. She stated, "Women represent over 50 percent of Armenia's population and Armenia needs every woman's talent, courage and strength. No country can afford to ignore half of its human capacity." She noted that the advancement of women is the advancement of all citizens.

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Enthusiasm for Mentoring  
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¶4. Press extensively covered the launch of the mentoring program

and included several print outlets, a society magazine (Yerevan Magazine), and Armenia TV. Armenia TV interviewed several mentors and mentees, and conducted a personal interview with the Ambassador which was featured twice during international news broadcasts and reached a potential audience of more than three million people. A press release and information packets for print and online press further highlighted the launching.

¶15. Mentors and mentees were enthusiastic about the event. One aspiring choir director mentee said she had found her "perfect match" in a prominent musician. Another gushed to a newspaper journalist that the initiative was "excellent, one of a kind." A development specialist mentor told a PAS representative, "I couldn't believe it when I was invited to participate. I was so honored. This is exactly what Armenia needs! Now it will be up to us to make sure we fulfill our commitment."

¶16. While participants are encouraged to develop mentoring relationships on their own terms, the Public Affairs Section will continue to provide logistical support to AUA in organizing upcoming mentoring events, including panel discussions, roundtables, and other activities that promote mentor/mentee interaction. The program is an important step in promoting women's issues in Armenia and is key to an overall Mission focus on the promotion of women's rights and welfare.

Yovanovitch